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PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER
10 April 1985

Report reveals how Soviets use U.S. know-how

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PARIS — In the spring of 1979, a document arrived at the Soviet Ministry of Aeronautical Industry in Moscow and was eventually routed to the Sukhoi and Mikoyan aircraft factories, which produce bombers and fighters.

After studying the papers carefully, Soviet technicians set to work to make some modifications in their SU-27 and MiG-29 fighters. They improved their fire control, fuel and communication systems and the coordination of data between on-board computers and ground stations.

Because they knew from the document precisely what changes would work, the engineers didn't have to waste valuable time testing alternatives, which saved the Soviet Union eight million rubles — about \$11 million — in man-hours.

All those research hours had been graciously expended instead by Western engineers in Western laboratories who thought, of course, that their work had been for Western planes. It was — until Soviet military intelligence obtained that document chock-full of tips on building a better mousetrap.

And for the source of this account of technological theft — right down to the value in rubles — the West has none other than the Soviets themselves to thank, it seems.

In an extraordinary leak from French counterintelligence, the newspaper *Le Monde* published excerpts last weekend from a secret 1980 Soviet report that matter-of-factly outlined how the U.S.S.R. uses Western technological expertise to make improvements in armaments.

"The use of the positive experience from abroad allowed our country to proceed in a favorable fashion in implementing new, improved techniques and in shorter time," says the report, analyzing the results for 1979 in bureaucratic worthy of any Western agency.

The study said that in 1979 alone, Western technology obtained either from publicly available scientific journals or through "special channels" had saved the Soviet military aircraft industry 48.6 million rubles (\$65 million) in time and testing, up from 18.8 million rubles in 1978.

Specifically, Soviet engineers had obtained 87 Western "samples" and 3,543 technical documents and had exploited them "in a practical fashion in research series and the implementation of new arms systems... as well as existing arms systems in the course of being perfected."

Of the data acquired by "special channels" — spies — 61.5 percent had come from the United States, 10.5 percent from West Germany, 8 percent from France, 7.5 percent from Britain and 3 percent from Japan, the report said. It did not account for the remaining 9.5 percent.

The report, compiled by the Ministry of Aeronautical Industry, cited two examples of how this information was used, although it did not specify how it was obtained in each example.

The first case involved the SU-27 and MiG-29 improvements and the

second involved the SU-25, a ground-attack airplane. In the latter case, engineers saved two million rubles (\$2.7 million) in the construction of a high-performance wing.

What's more, the report focused on only one industry, aircraft. Other military sectors presumably benefited from information obtained from Western sources.

The document was not surprising to Western analysts — "not one iota," a U.S. congressional staff member said in Washington last week.

Rather, it provided stark evidence, straight from the other side, for Western officials who have become more and more worried about the bleeding of technology to the East, either by export or outright theft.

"It isn't shocking, it's discouraging," said William Schneider Jr., U.S. undersecretary of state for security assistance, science and technology, in a telephone interview. "It's depressing to see what has already gone out the door."

"The information tallies with things we generally have known.... We've been following the matter of Soviet [data] collection, and we know they have collected enormous amounts during the detente period that have gone directly into their first-line equipment [such as] the guidance packages and related equipment on SS-18s, SS-19s and SS-20s," a reference to nuclear missiles.

The Reagan administration in particular has been pressuring its NATO allies to tighten controls on the export to the Soviet bloc of computers, precision tool-making equipment and other items. The reasoning is simple: Why lose an edge that the West has, its ability to make things the Soviets either cannot make, cannot make well, or cannot make in quantity?

Meeting regularly in Paris as the Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Control (COCOM), 15 Western nations and Japan draw up lists of sensitive items that corporations may not send to the Soviet bloc — or to neutral nations that might reship them to the East — without the committee's approval. In these meetings, some of the allies, notably the British and West Germans, have been concerned that the United States is too worried about control-

ling technology, to the point of harming Western industry by denying them export markets.

But recently, Schneider said, European opinion has become more hard-line, because governments recognize that any technology that enables the Soviets to improve their armed forces will require countermeasures. SU-25, SU-27 and MiG-29 are all better aircraft now, which means Western aircraft would have a tougher task in any conflict.

"They [Europeans] no longer view doing high-tech business with the Soviets as doing good business," Schneider said, "because they have to offset the [Soviet] military machine, and that's something they don't like."

The French especially have "taken something of a leadership role in exposing the Soviet intelligence apparatus," he added, as shown by the release of the Soviet study.

According to *Le Monde*, the document was obtained by French agents from a source within the Soviet hierarchy several years ago. Why the report was passed along to the news-

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paper at this time was not clear. But the authenticity of the document was not questioned by the French government in the days after its publication.

Indeed, the only negative reaction came from the Soviet Embassy here, which called the Le Monde report "flagrant disinformation" designed to disrupt French-Soviet relations. Yet, for an allegedly false study, the Soviets went to some length to stop its release.

After publication of the first part of the two-part series, the Soviets demanded that French authorities block the second, to which Le Monde pointedly replied, "Contrary to what the Soviet Embassy appears to believe, the official authorities do not have the means to stop journalistic work. At least not in France."

For the French, the document had special meaning. According to Le Monde, similar documents formed the basis for President Francois Mitterrand's decision two years ago to expel 47 Soviet diplomats for "offensive conduct." Le Monde even printed all the names of those expelled, the first time they had been made public.